



**COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
TOWN OF NEW MARLBOROUGH
OFFICE OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN
807 Mill River Southfield Road, Mill River, MA 01244-0099
Phone: 413-229-8116 Fax: 413-229-6674
E-mail: nmbos@newmarlboroughma.gov**

**Tara B. White, Chair
Michele Shalaby
Nathaniel H. Yohalem
Board of Selectmen**

**Minutes of Selectmen's Meeting
Monday, January 12, 2015**

Board Members Present: Tara B. White, Chairman
Michele Shalaby
Nat Yohalem

Others Present: Joseph Kellogg, Administrative Assistant
Sharon Fleck, Administrative Secretary
Kristen Sparhawk
Fran Lartigue

The meeting of the Board of Selectmen convened at 6:04 p.m.

School Committee Members – Kristen Sparhawk and Fran Lartigue were welcomed to the meeting as New Marlborough members of the School Committee. Chairman White expressed her disappointment with the decision of the School Committee eliminating the Town's ability to do a 2-1/2% override for the bond issue, without any discussions with the Town prior to the vote. The Town would then have to appropriate \$128,756 into the existing budget which would not allow for any increase in the school budget, but would require a reduction of Town services, or would raise taxes in the Town significantly. The structure of the vote would have been to: (1) Support the school by approving new boilers and a new roof. (2) Do you want your taxes raised? This would allow voting "yes" for the new boilers/roof, however, the "no" vote for raising taxes would not be a no vote for the bond issue, thereby committing the Town to the bond. Selectman Yohalem explained that by the School wanting to have a "majority" vote, it eliminated each Town's individual vote. Each town would have to approve the bond by a 2/3 vote for an override. In order for the bond to be approved, a 100% approval rate by all five towns would be required, but a "majority" vote would negate the Town's ability to approve or not approve the bond issue. Selectman Yohalem further stated that the Board fully supported the bond, but not the way it is currently structured. Limiting the bond to 10 years puts an incredible tax burden on the Town's residents; a longer (15 or 20 years) bond would ease that burden on the taxpayers. Selectman Yohalem requested a draft of the budget before it is presented to the towns. Fran Lartigue will clarify whether or not the \$128,756 payment due in December 2016 is a full year's payment or a half-year payment. Both Kristen Sparhawk and Fran Lartigue stated they would bring the Town's concerns before the School Committee in order to enact a change in both the structure of a vote and the bond.

Selectman Shalaby raised issues regarding the future of Southern Berkshire Regional School District. There is a declining population, and an even greater decline of students, six buildings that must be maintained, one of which needs a new roof and boilers, along with excess capacity in that building. That building can house up to 1500 students; there are now approximately 725 students in that building. If the SRSBD decides to stay on this course, each taxpayer's taxes will have to increase in order to maintain the schools and the cost would reduce the educational integrity of the schools. Selectman Shalaby further discussed the fact that our State Representative is continually warning about the State coming in to make decisions about the schools and the importance of the School making decisions now that will affect the schools long term. Selectman Shalaby further reported there are Shared Services meetings going on that she would like to see be more meaningful with consolidating of administrative services. Selectman Yohalem advised of a greater need of shared services for Vo-Tech education with SBRSD, as there are many students who are not going on to college. Selectman Yohalem suggested to both Fran Lartigue and Kristen Sparhawk that periodic informational meetings take place with them so the Board can be kept up-to-date.

Joe Kellogg reported a conversation he had with Bruce Turner who stated that once SBA approves the project, the SBRSD had 90 days (April 14, 2015) to get financing. However, the initial construction start date of April 2015 would be missed. Boilers could be installed in the summer of 2015, but a new roof may have to wait until 2016. An alternative may be to bring in portable classrooms so the roof construction could begin in summer 2015.

Selectman Yohalem also expressed the Board's feelings that New Marlborough's contribution to the school budget for 2016 should be level funded.

A discussion ensued regarding school choice. Selectman Shalaby reported reading an article that stated Berkshire County had the most school "choice" students of any county in the State. Joe Kellogg reported that School Committees love "choice" money is because those monies go into a special account that the school committee can use however it chooses, but not necessarily to fund a budget. The Town of New Marlborough "chooses" out more students than are "choiced" in.

Schedule Town Meeting and Election for School Bond – Will not be required due to a change to "majority" vote.

Town Administration Structure – Will be added to each week's agenda as a follow-up. A letter will be drafted by Joe Kellogg asking for a meeting with a representative from the Monterey, Sheffield, and New Marlborough Selectboards to discuss (1) sharing a Town Administrator with New Marlborough, and (2) joint purchase of a mower for the Highway Department to be shared with New Marlborough, Sheffield and Monterey.

School Bond Letter – A letter will be sent to Carl Stewart and David Hastings requesting that New Marlborough's school budget for FY16 be level funded at \$2,505,996, including all operating, capital and debt expenditures.

Audit – Chairman White reported that she spoke with Tom Scanlon, who will send Matt to New Marlborough on Monday, January 19, 2016, to begin working with Ann-Maria Enoch to begin an exit audit on the Tax Collector's office.

Procurement Officer - A motion was made, seconded and so voted to appoint Joe Kellogg Procurement Officer.

Laptop Computer – Chairman White reported she received an email from Michael Skorput offering to buy the laptop. The Board decided that the laptop, laptop riser, vacuum, etc. should be returned to the Town.

Police Department - Chairman White reported that Police Chief, Graham Frank, has been having Joseph Keefner doing “ride alongs” with him. Graham would like to hire him, as John Mullen has been working too many hours. Joe has completed training and has submitted references. Joe will come in and meet with the Board on Monday, January 26, 2015.

Town Report – Chairman White reminded Joe Kellogg that reports are needed from all departments for the Annual Town Report.

Wired West – Tim Newman will meet with the Board on Monday, January 26, 2015 regarding the Wired West project. A copy of a letter sent to Senator Rosenberg from the Town of Colrain will be sent to Senator Downing.

Cultural Council Meeting – An awards meeting will be held in the evening in March at the Library to which the Board of Selectmen is invited.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Office of the Sheriff – A letter dated January 5, 2015 was received stating that the Town did not pay its assessment for the Berkshire County Communication Center in the amount of \$9,100.00. The original invoice was dated April 10, 2014 and was due and payable August 1, 2014. This will be put on a warrant and paid the week of January 19, 2015.

Budget Meeting – A meeting will be scheduled January 21, 2014 at 11 a.m. to discuss the budgets. It was decided that the Treasurer would only have to come to budget meetings if necessary.

Administrative Assistant's Update – Joe Kellogg spoke with Sheffield about the CDBG grant, but they had already partnered with Becket. Joe will revise the format of the agenda and will eliminate “times.”

A motion was made, seconded and so voted to approve the minutes of the November 24, 2014 Selectmen's Meeting, and the January 5, 2015 Meeting as amended.

Being that there was no further business to be brought before the Board, a motion was made, seconded and so voted by all members to adjourn the meeting 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Fleck
Administrative Secretary